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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)PAGE 01 CARACA 01840 01 OF 02 192124Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	C-01	DODE-00	HA-09
	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SNP-01	SP-01
	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	/041W		
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R 192121Z FEB 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8479

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01840

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PINR, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT ANOTHER COUP IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY SINCE THE MILITARY HAS LEARNED JUST HOW FRAGILE AND UNPOPULAR THE VENEZUELAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IS. HE HAS FEW SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOW TO PREVENT A REPETITION OF THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 4, HOWEVER, OTHER THAN THE GENERALITIES OF CHANGING THE CABINET, FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND GOVERNING BETTER. [REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT EDUARDO FERNANDEZ IS THE POLITICIAN MOST STRENGTHENED BY THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE COUP ATTEMPT DESPITE THE

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EVIDENT SURGE IN RIVAL CALDERA'S POPULARITY. [REDACTED] HOPES THAT US MILITARY OFFICERS WILL POUND THE MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY INTO THE HEADS OF THEIR VENEZUELAN COUNTERPARTS. "WE ARE NOT AS DEMOCRATIC AS WE THOUGHT WE WERE," HE LAMENTED. END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH [REDACTED]

3. POLOFF MET WITH [REDACTED]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 18 FEB 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JUL 2008 200503656

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INNER CIRCLE OF POLITICAL ADVISORS, ON FEBRUARY 18 TO DISCUSS THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH.

[REDACTED] COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS.

THE COUP LEADERS

4. [REDACTED]
CONSPIRATORS, CHARACTERIZED THEM AS "NASSERITES WHOSE IDEOLOGY WAS A MIXTURE OF LEFTIST POPULISM AND FASCISM." HAD THEY WON, [REDACTED] THEY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE FORMED A GOVERNMENT REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO THAT OF VELASCO ALVARADO'S IN PERU. THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF THE COUP, IN [REDACTED] WAS THE CONSPIRATORS' GARGANTUAN AMBITION. LAMENTABLY, THE DEVASTATION WROUGHT ON THE VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES BY POOR LEADERSHIP AND ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION ALLOWED THE PLOTTERS TO PROCEED UNCHECKED. ONLY THEIR INEPTITUDE KEPT THEM FROM SUCCEEDING, [REDACTED]

THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

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5. [REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED THE COUP ATTEMPT AS A "POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DISASTER" FOR VENEZUELA. THE MILITARY HAS BECOME AWARE OF THE SYSTEM'S FRAGILITY AND UNPOPULARITY, [REDACTED] WHICH MAKES ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CHANGE CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND POLICIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. UNFORTUNATELY, HE CONTINUED, THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN REACTING FOOLISHLY IN THE TWO WEEKS SINCE THE COUP ATTEMPT. THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS IS CAP'S ISOLATION AND CONFUSION. "HE HAS NO ONE LEFT TO TALK WITH EXCEPT EDUARDO FERNANDEZ," [REDACTED] "AND EVERYONE KNOWS IT." SPEAKING OF FERNANDEZ, [REDACTED] CONTINUED, HE WILL EMERGE FROM THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE COUP ATTEMPT AS THE SINGLE MOST STRENGTHENED POLITICIAN DESPITE THE TEMPORARY SURGE IN RIVAL RAFAEL CALDERA'S POPULARITY. [REDACTED] FREQUENT MEETINGS BETWEEN CAP AND FERNANDEZ, THE LATEST OF WHICH HAD OCCURRED THE PREVIOUS EVENING. [REDACTED] FERNANDEZ HAD BEEN URGING CAP TO MAKE SOME CABINET CHANGES, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THAT AD
ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHTER LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ WAS

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UNINTERESTED IN REPLACING AVILA VIVAS OWING TO THE
NEGATIVE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES ENTAILED IN ENTERING CAP'S
GOVERNMENT AT THIS JUNCTURE. "WHO IN HIS RIGHT MIND WOULD
WANT TO," [REDACTED] RHETORICALLY ASKED, ADDING THAT THIS
RELUCTANCE COULD WELL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR CAP TO MAKE
ANY CABINET CHANGES. AS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT,

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[REDACTED]

COMMENTED THAT RANGEL SYMBOLIZED CAP'S ALLEGEDLY EXCESSIVE
INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND LACK OF CONCERN FOR THE
PLIGHT OF VENEZULANS. (NOTE: JEALOUSY AND A TOUCH OF
MALE CHAUVINISM MAY SKEW [REDACTED] PERCEPTION OF RANGEL.)

CORRUPTION

6. [REDACTED] THAT FERNANDEZ WAS ALSO PRESSURING CAP TO
DO SOMETHING TO BE SEEN TO BE COMBATTING CORRUPTION, IF

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R 192121Z FEB 92
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 01840

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PINR, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

ONLY NOTHING MORE THAN A FEW HIGH VISIBILITY TRIALS. COPEI IN ITS OWN RIGHT WOULD HENCEFORTH AVOID EVEN THE INDICATION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THOSE WITH A CORRUPT IMAGE, STARTING WITH AD SENATOR DAVID MORALES BELLO. COPEI, ROMERO CONTINUED, WOULD REFUSE TO SUPPORT MORALES BELLO FOR PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS NEXT MONTH, EVEN AT THE PRICE OF BREAKING THE "INSTITUTIONAL PACT" WITH AD. ([REDACTED])

[REDACTED] THE "INSTITUTIONAL PACT" IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES, AD AND COPEI, FOR THE DIVISION OF CONGRESSIONAL AND OTHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. IN CONGRESS, FOR INSTANCE, THE GOVERNING PARTY GETS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE, POSSESSION OF WHICH AUTOMATICALLY CONSTITUTES PRESIDENCY OF THE INSTITUTION ITSELF. THE
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OTHER PARTY, IN TURN, GETS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LOWER HOUSE OR CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, AND SO ON.) ON THE OTHER HAND, [REDACTED] CORRUPTION WAS SO PERVASIVE THAT ANY SERIOUS EFFORT TO EXTIRPATE IT RISKED THE REBELLION OF THE POLITICAL CLASS.

PERSONALITIES

7. [REDACTED]

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ATTRIBUTED A LARGE MEASURE OF THE BLAME FOR THE COUP ATTEMPT TO NOTED MAN-OF-LETTERS ARTURO USLAR PIETRI, WHO, AS TACIT HEAD OF THE SO-CALLED "NOTABLES," HAD STRONGLY CRITICIZED MANY ASPECTS OF VENEZUELAN POLITICS. "WHEN THE WISE MAN ACTS LIKE THAT," [REDACTED] "IT CALLS THE

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VERY LEGITIMACY OF THE SYSTEM INTO QUESTION." [REDACTED]
CONTINUED THAT USLAR PIETRI WOULD NOT VOLUNTEER ANY NAMES
WHEN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM ASKS HIM TO
SUBSTANTIATE HIS RECENT CHARGE OF WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION
(SEE CARACAS 01728). "HE IS A COWARD," [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS, HEAD OF
THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM AT SIMON BOLIVAR
UNIVERSITY AND ANOTHER "NOTABLE," AS A PERSON SO FULL OF
RESENTMENT THAT HE ENGAGES IN CRITICISM OF OTHERS AS A
FORM OF SELF-CATHARSIS. AND PUBLIC PROSECUTOR RAMON
ESCOVAR SALOM, [REDACTED] IS "SO AMBITIOUS AND

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RESENTFUL THAT HE WOULD DO ANYTHING IF HE WERE PROMISED
THE PRESIDENCY," EVEN, PERHAPS, [REDACTED]
BECOME THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE LEFTIST, RADICAL
PARTY "CAUSA R" ("R" CAUSE; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

THE LETTER "R" DID NOT REFER TO ANYTHING. PARTY
PROPAGANDA SOMETIMES HAS THE "R" STAND FOR "REVOLUTIONARY"
OR "RADICAL." TAKE YOUR PICK. THE OFFICIAL NAME,
HOWEVER, IS "CAUSA R.")

WHAT THE GOV SHOULD DO

8. [REDACTED] HAD FEW SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS IN REGARD TO
WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO TO PREVENT ANOTHER COUP
ATTEMPT BEYOND THE GENERALITIES OF MAKING CABINET CHANGES,
FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND GOVERNING WELL. HE DID HAVE A
SUGGESTION FOR THE U.S.G., HOWEVER. U.S. MILITARY
OFFICERS, HE URGED, SHOULD POUND THE MESSAGE OF SUPPORT
FOR DEMOCRACY INTO THE HEADS OF THEIR VENEZUELAN
COUNTERPARTS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. THIS WILL BE
ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, HE
OPINED, UNTIL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE LOOMING
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (DECEMBER, 1993) HAS MADE ANOTHER
COUP ATTEMPT BOTH IMPOSSIBLE AND UNNECESSARY PENDING THE
DISCLOSURE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT AND HIS
PROGRAM.

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